



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION

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RE: Ethical Guidance for the Distance Learning Environment

Colleagues:

The Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) thanks all educators for their dedication to student learning during these challenging times. Teachers, administrators, counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and other licensed educators – in addition to the great majority of students and families – have always understood the importance of our work to Oregon’s future. As any perusal of social media would quickly demonstrate, many parents and families are also acknowledging the tremendous knowledge, skill, and patience educators call upon each day to serve our students. TSPC intends to continue providing high-quality, timely support to all educators. Please reach out to the agency at contact.tspc@oregon.gov, or Executive Director, Dr. Rosilez, at Anthony.Rosilez@oregon.gov with any needs, questions, or concerns you might have as we transition to a distance learning environment.

Distance teaching and learning, whether through remote or virtual instruction, will be a new endeavor for many of us; and even for the most tech savvy, providing quality, equitable instruction to all students will be a challenge. Distance learning also requires careful consideration of the ethical principles we maintain as professionals. New dilemmas may require us to consider unique strategies to meet our students’ needs within these principles. *The usual educator ethical and competent standards apply to Oregon educators on a virtual platform. Maintaining those professional standards on screen or in digital communications is critical.* For the benefit and protection of students and educators alike, please remember to continue to educate students within Oregon’s Ethical Educator Standards:

1. Understand and strictly adhere to all employing school district procedures and policies regarding electronic communications with students.
2. The Ethical Educator always communicates with students in a transparent and appropriate manner.
 - a. Leverage your school district issued email account as much as possible in electronic communications with students.
 - b. Avoid using personal accounts on social media platforms for instructional purposes or for communicating directly with students.
 - c. One-to-one text messaging between an educator and a student is not a transparent or safe method of electronic communication.
 - d. Adhere to a consistent timeframe of availability during which you will be available to communicate with students. Best Practices state this timeframe of availability should

closely mirror the hours of a normal school day. The need for late evening communication with individual students should be carefully scrutinized.

3. Educators who will be using school district issued devices / technology to provide instruction to their students should only use the technology for district approved work activities. Using school district owned devices and technology for personal or unauthorized activities can be considered a violation of both district policies and state standards. Oregon Administrative Rule 584-020-0040 states:

- (4) Gross neglect of duty is any serious and material inattention to or breach of professional responsibilities. The following may be admissible as evidence of gross neglect of duty. Consideration may include but is not limited to:
 - (a) Substantial unauthorized use of: school name or financial credit; school materials or equipment for personal purposes; or school personnel to provide personal services unrelated to school business;
 - (q) Unauthorized use of school electronic equipment to receive, store, produce or send sexually explicit materials.

Remember that these ethical standards apply to all Oregon educators in ALL their varied platforms and engagements with students whether they are using school electronic equipment or their own. They should also NOT use the school electronic equipment for any personal needs while it is being used at their homes.

Additionally, school districts and educators should look critically at any social media policies in place that may need to be either clarified or adjusted during this time of distance learning. Student privacy and online protection is a critical piece of responsible distance learning that includes both a strict firewall with regard to student work, images or information, as well as a critical and protective eye on any online links that are being shared with students.

Each circumstance you may face in your work is unique and will require equally unique analysis in light of ethical standards. Keeping these considerations in mind, we can focus our attention on doing what we do best – teaching.

Best Wishes,



Anthony J. Rosilez, Ph.D., J.D.
Executive Director